

Salton Sea Management: All Committees Meeting

Meeting Summary

Meeting held June 5, 2017

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

Meeting in Brief

A number of team members from the California Natural Resources Agency presented its draft 10-Year 'Phase 1' Management and plans for near-term implementation and received questions and feedback from stakeholders. The Consensus Building Institute presented its independent stakeholder issue assessment findings and recommendations for enhancing collaboration in the Advisory Committee process to effectively implement the 10-Year Plan. Meeting participants provided feedback on the findings and thoughts for refining the recommended structure going forward, with an emphasis on ensuring meaningful inclusion and integration of local communities in the stakeholder consultation process.

Action Items

Timeline	Who	What
Fall 2017	State and Tetra Tech	Present Final Implementation Plan
Summer	State and CBI	Vet refined committee structure with chairs
October 2017	State and CBI	Next All-Committees Meeting

10-Year Plan Presentation and Discussion – State of California and Tetra Tech

Presentation

The State and its consultant Tetra Tech discussed the status of existing and near-term projects as well as the current 10-Year/Phase 1 Plan. The State's full presentation is available on CNRA's website, at <http://resources.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/June-5-All-Committee-Meeting-with-attachments.pdf>.

Questions and Answers from State's Presentation

After the presentation, participants asked questions that are mostly captured below:

How does New River SCH fit into the Plan?	<i>The Species Conservation Habitat is part of SSMP as well as its own project. It will likely also be used as a water management pond for part of the rest of the system. The projects in the SSMP are all designed to be functional as separate projects.</i>
For design build projects, how does the State ensure there's no conflict of interest for the contractor to hire the engineer?	<i>The State hires the whole team, with the contractor as typically the lead entity. In this case, Tetra Tech helps prepare bid packages that go to select firms. Tetra Tech and its team members are prohibited from bidding on the project.</i>
What are the operation and maintenance costs expected to be per year?	<i>This will be available in approximately one month. The State will hold a teleconference to discuss costs.</i>

Is DWR coordinating with CalEPA in developing the 10 Year Plan?	<i>CalEPA is a member of the Governor's Task Force and along with CARB participates in the development and refinement of dust suppressions measures.</i>
Do any of the projects include recreation?	<i>Dust mitigation and habitat are the primary objectives. But some projects will also allow for fishing, boating and other recreation.</i>
During construction, how will the project team interface with the Torres Martinez Tribe and others at the local level to keep dust levels down?	<i>Each project will be required to submit a dust control plan to the local air quality management district (ICAPCD or SCAQMD). Team members from Torres-Martinez will be involved in the development of the dust control plan for their project</i>
What's the plan to manage fish (and thereby bird) populations in the Species Conservation Habitat, since the fish don't do well in winter when the shallow ponds get cold?	<i>USGS has been successful in keeping fish alive in shallow ponds. These projects are experimental, with many unknowns. DFW will be monitoring this closely. We plan to have more discussion about this later this summer.</i>
Is there an estimated time frame for resolving the easement issues at the Sea for the SCH?	<i>The State hopes to have this worked out in July.</i>
In what ways does the Plan address dry playa and seek to create viable habitat?	<i>We plan to manage dust and establish habitat through vegetation and inundating playa, depending on migration strategies, to bring water to the different areas through channels. (Note this doesn't work as well for large areas of dry playa.) Optimistically, we've noted dozens of new snowy plover nesting sites in areas next to shoreline with large exposed playa.</i>
What data is being used to assess flow volumes?	<i>State has some data from IID EIR/EIS, for water transfer, State Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration PEIR and EIR for SCH. Team members are in process of getting additional hydrologic data.</i>
What's going to be done regarding the impact of exposed playa on the health and quality of life for residents along shore where people live?	<i>The 10-Year Plan currently concentrates on the north and south ends of the Sea where there are water sources and we have secured some permitting. These areas will be developed as habitat (itself a dust suppression technique) and various other dust suppression techniques under development. We will be addressing east and west sides of the Sea a couple of years into the 10-Year Plan. We are now working more closely with Comité Cívico and Burke Rix Communications to engage local residents and harder-to-reach community members regarding public health needs and strategies.</i>
What is the role of longer-term planning, e.g., water inputs into the Sea?	<i>The 10-Year Plan includes identifying longer-range strategies, e.g., stabilization of shoreline habitat. The 10-Year Plan itself won't include water inputs but that could be part of a longer-term plan.</i>
What will be the structure and focus of upcoming community workshops?	<i>There will be more focus on sharing information and receiving targeted input from local communities and agencies on upcoming projects.</i>

Discussion and Feedback on 10-Year Plan

The following comments were shared regarding the State's proposed 10-Year Plan and existing to near-term projects as discussed in the presentation. (Note, approximately 80 people were in the room and another 20 or so participated online. CBI integrated online discussion into the meeting notes.)

Local planning

- Encourage and remind State to coordinate with local water districts to evaluate SSMP projects are planned consistently with the local needs.

- Interest in seeing the State engage water dischargers in crafting solutions and considering water quality.
- A stabilized shoreline/perimeter lake is a high priority for some locally. Strong interest in seeing it mentioned in the 10-Year Plan as part of long-term planning.
- Reminder about consultation with local community and tapping immense resource of local residents. Find ways to give residents tasks (e.g., bird counts); understanding it takes resources to manage volunteers.
- Need for early input at local level in successful adaptive management.

Data, modeling and transparency

- Concern expressed about potential loss of fisheries before receiving model outputs, resulting in significant wildlife impacts. This is important for understanding likely impacts as well as for funding projects. Opinions currently differ about how important specific water flow data are as compared to a general understanding of flows. Note also that in coming weeks, State will get data to compare playa exposure (by satellite) to calibrate the model.
- Encourage more transparency regarding data the State receives from its consultants and modeling. Sharing data publicly will enhance the credibility of the process while creating more informed stakeholders and ultimately better outcome. Also a concern that many Advisory Committee members may have a vested interest in the efforts. Would like to see resident representation on Advisory Committees.

Increased resources

- Need for more local personnel for SSMP to support State and Bruce locally, given the large scale of the project. (Note CDFW is about to advertise a new position.)
- Important to clarify timelines for feedback.

Advisory Committee Collaboration Going Forward: CBI Presentation of Stakeholder Findings and Recommendations

The Consensus Building Institute (CBI) is an independent facilitation firm with significant water experience in California, including at Owens Lake, which has been hired with foundation funding to facilitate near-term advisory committee efforts in implementing the 10-year Management Plan. CBI presented its findings and recommendations from interviewing over 35 key Advisory Committee members and stakeholders in Salton Sea management efforts. The presentation and draft assessment report are available on the CNRA website at <http://resources.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/June-5-All-Committee-Meeting-with-attachments.pdf>.

Discussion and Feedback on CBI's Report and Presentation Findings

Participants provided feedback on the findings, including what they saw as key omissions and/or clarifications for the draft Report.

Missing from the Report:

- Need interviews with local land managers and wildlife and habitat regulatory agencies, e.g., CDFW and USFWS (local offices).

- Need for separate consultation process with the Tribes as sovereign nations. Note that the Tribe has 11,000 acres on north side; management is a huge issue.
- Transparency about budget for CBI (note that funding for facilitation and stakeholder interviews is not from the state but from outside foundations).

Discussion of CBI Recommendations

Building on its interview findings, CBI facilitators Gina Bartlett and Ryan Golten presented recommendations for enhancing productive collaboration in the Advisory Committee process going forward, specifically recommending fewer advisory committees and establishing committee work plans linked to the 10-year plan implementation schedule. Participants discussed the recommendations in small groups and then shared feedback in the large group.

Importance of integrating local community input into advisory process

- Importance of local input in helping inform where data/science needed.
- When community is asked for input, important to know whether being asked for informal review, concrete feedback, or formal consultation, and how input will be used.
- Local communities should be consulted at the relevant junctures and their input incorporated into policy discussions and project planning at the appropriate stages (earlier rather than later). Community outreach should be integrated with and not separate from the Advisory Committee process.
- Importance of building the investment of committee members and engaging with the environmental justice issues. Comité del Cívico could support committees with some of this, e.g., more formalized/structured translation.

Use current resources and don't "reinvent the wheel"

- Hard to be discussing committee process when we're barely breaking ground on projects
- If any of the committees are reorganized, need to be clear about how existing advisory committee members should continue to plug in. Don't want to lose anyone!

Committees need clear charters, facilitation support, and cross-pollination

- Develop charters for committees, with clear goals and objectives tied to the Work Plan, will help ensure they're focused, working toward getting projects on the ground in effective and coordinated way.
- Provide each committee the overarching status of near-term projects and what they're learning as they go.
- Important to have good notes, make them available, and have follow-up between and before meetings. Useful to committee members and other stakeholders to see what committees are working on. Important to have State staff/consultant facilitation support for the committees.
- Communication and integration between committees. Particularly when looking at detailed implementation plan, need to know what other committees are doing. Support for the idea of periodic all-committee meetings. We should have a website to share info, committee & sub-committee meeting notes. Both CBI and SSA can help with this.

Thoughts on Committee Structure Going Forward

- 10-Year Plan Committee may include subcommittees for outreach, projects, environmental compliance, and funding (rather than each of these meeting completely independently). This would help ensure integration of committee work and allow people to attend a one-day meeting for both the 10-Year Plan Committee and subcommittees. This Committee could also include a small coordinating group to help plan meeting agendas.
- Strong interest in integrating community oversight, citizen science, and local input into the Advisory Committee process – potentially with local community representatives on each committee, to feed back into outreach strategy.
- In the funding committee, there may be a need for creative, scaled-up funding and financing strategy. We should engage folks involved in corporate financing (Silicon Valley, Wall Street), including in Coachella Valley. These efforts should be coordinated with outreach.
- Coordinating committee is a good idea. Used well at Owens Lake.
- Useful to schedule meetings well in advance so members are able to attend in person.

Science Committee in Particular

- Getting report-outs from 10-Year Committee and updates on project status could be helpful as science committee evaluates areas to prioritize, which will be driven by feasibility and permitting status.
- Interest in integrating air quality and science committees, taking into consideration that:
 - Science committee also looks at habitat and restoration issues
 - Science committee separately required by Task force guidelines
 - Air quality committee should incorporate local input and citizen science and regulatory with a focus on environmental justice and community outreach
 - Interest in having a discreet forum for technical discussions among scientists
 - Some discussion of having a public health subcommittee
- Science committee needs to be used more strategically to provide useful input to State.

Need for Enhancing Public Outreach

- Significant hunger from general public for information
- Need creative structure and new community engagement tools – e.g., monthly call or other forum (State's communication team will be working on this)
- Need to plug into existing forums – e.g., monthly forum in Coachella Valley; website for sharing information (State's communication team will be working to inventory and connect with existing networks and forums, to streamline and coordinate information and feedback)
- Possible need for Citizen's Task Force
- Comité Cívico del Valle and Burke-Rix shared information about upcoming public workshops around the Salton Sea, available at the end of the State's 10-

Year Plan presentation on the CNRA website, at <http://resources.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/June-5-All-Committee-Meeting-with-attachments.pdf>.

Project Team Introductions

California Natural Resources Agency Assistant Secretary Bruce Wilcox introduced a number of team members, who were able to attend, working to advance Salton Sea efforts.

- DWR: Vivien Maisonneuve, Laura Peters, and Ted Frink
- Tetra Tech: Bill Brownlie
- Burke Rix Communications: Josh Zipperman will be working with the State and its consultant Tetra Tech, as well as the Salton Sea Authority, to share information and gather feedback locally about the 10-Year Plan.
- Comité Cívico del Valle: Luis Olmedo and Israel Cruz will be working with the State to help share information and gather input with the harder-to-reach populations in the Salton Sea area regarding the State's 10-Year Plan, particularly concerning issues of public health and environmental justice.
- DFW: Michael Flores, Jack Crayon and Samantha Haynes
- Regional Water Quality Control Board: Jeff Geraci

Next Steps

These notes will be finalized and published on the CNRA Salton Sea website. The California Department of Water Resources and its consultant, Tetra Tech, will refine its implementation plan and while activities on the Phase 1 Management Plan move forward. The State will develop a meeting framework for closely integrating the work of the Advisory Committees with the implementation plan to maximize effectiveness of the stakeholder process. This will include enhanced committee structure and organization (including refined charters, scope, support, and follow-up), with help from CBI. DWR and CBI will work with the Advisory Committees to prepare for the next all-Committee meeting in October.